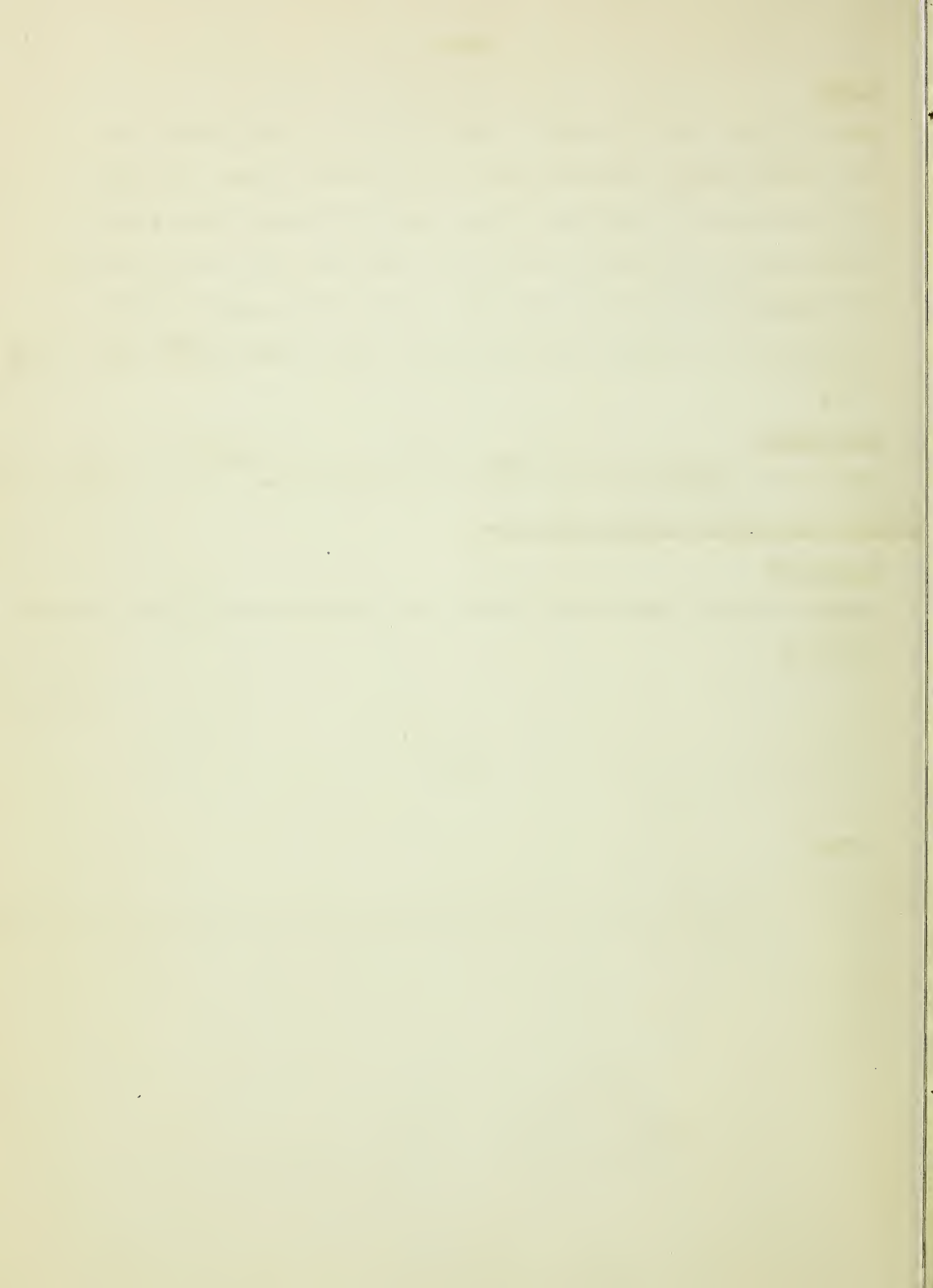


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F O R T U N E S    W A S H E D    A W A Y

"NEIGHBORLY COOPERATION  
FOR SOIL CONSERVATION"

Broadcast No. 26 in a series  
of discussions of soil con-  
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

October 22, 1938 6:00-6:15 p.m.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Early settlers coming to McLean County, Illinois, found the land in control of Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, and Delaware Indians. They found the red men raising corn and tobacco, and making sugar from maple trees in the groves. This land of gently rolling prairies prospered and flourished as the plow bit its way into the rich loessial soils. By 1870, it was the leading corn producing county in the United States. But the original deposits of loess have disappeared from many of the steeper slopes. On the prairies, the brown topsoil is washing away, exposing the yellowish soil that used to lie underneath the surface.

ORGAN:

ANNOUNCER

This is the story of three McLean County farmers who determined to stop their soil losses. These men, William Devine, H. M. Scott, and Charles Washburn, worked together in neighborly cooperation...

SOUND: Corn being dumped into crib by corn dump.

SCOTT (fading in)

Nice crop of corn you've got there, Bill.

DEVINE

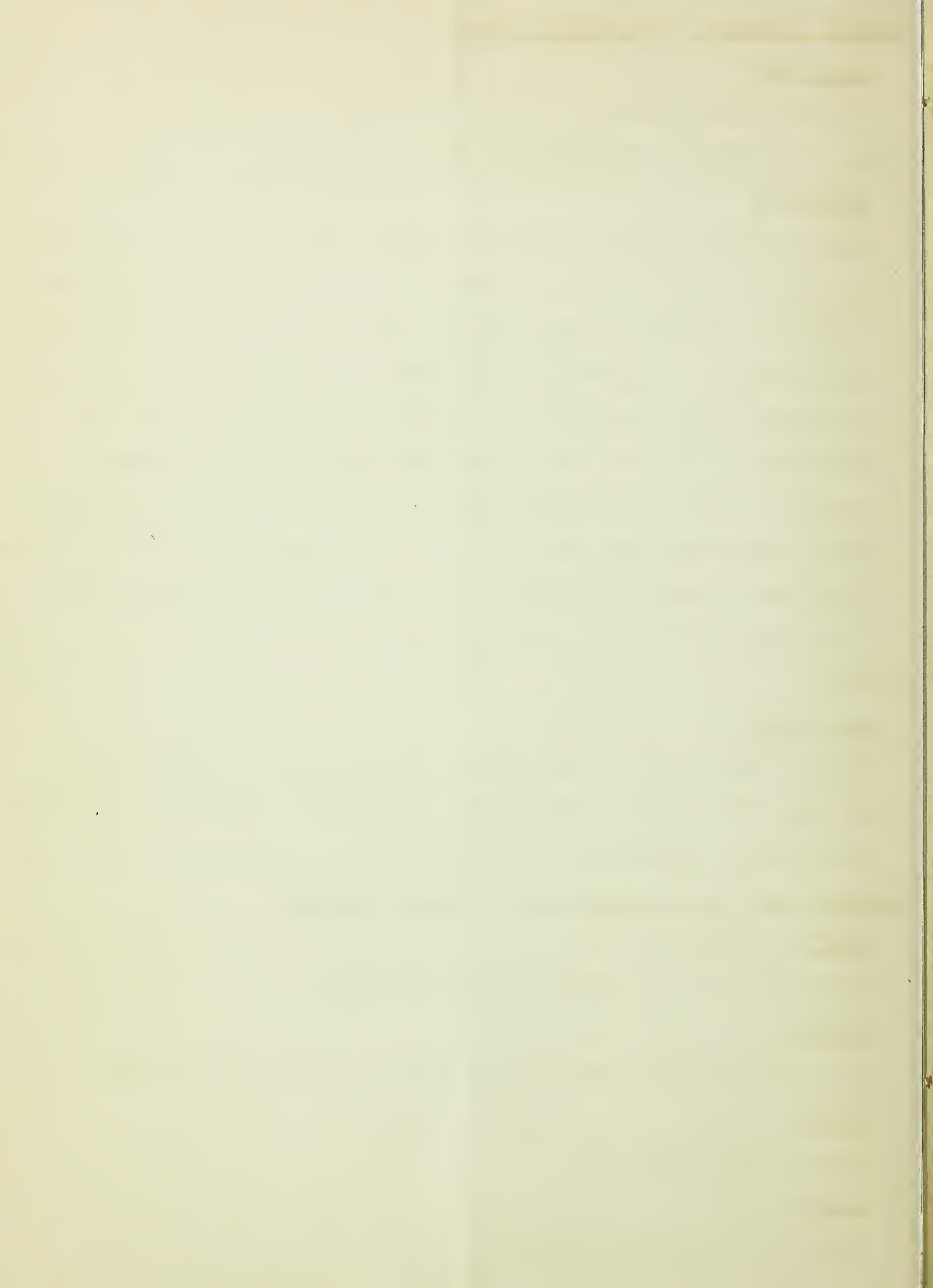
Oh, hello, Scott. Yeah, one of the best yields I ever had.

SCOTT

Hybrid corn, isn't it?

DEVINE

Yeah, it's a champion hybrid.



SCOTT

Some ears.

SOUND: Corn dumping stops, and man begins unhitching harness.

DEVINE

I figure this hybrid corn is the best.

SCOTT

Course, I don't have any corn myself. That darn fool that owned my farm before I did just about wore it out with corn. Think of putting 65 acres of corn on an 80-acre farm! And sloping land at that!

DEVINE

You got some pretty bad gullies, all right.

SCOTT

I'm having a hard time getting a good pasture sod, even. It's going to take a lot of lime and superphosphate.

SOUND: Unhitching completed.

DEVINE

Oh, well, that's part of farming. You'll find out a lot about it by the time you've been out here another year.

SCOTT (laughing)

Now, see here, Bill. Don't you think I'm just a crazy city farmer! I've been in the real estate business for a long time, and I know farms.

DEVINE

What'd you pick out the one you bought for?

SCOTT (laughing)

Well, you've got me there. Oh, here comes Washburn.







DEVINE AND SCOTT

Hello, Charles. Hello, Washburn.

WASHBURN

Morning.

DEVINE

What d'ya know?

WASHBURN

Not much. My wife isn't feeling so good. And I'm not so satisfied with prices these days, either. Looks like if it ain't one thing it's another.

SCOTT

In my case, it's what to do about that darned farm of mine that's all washed up.

DEVINE

I'm having a little trouble along that line myself.

WASHBURN

Yes, and me, too. But, say, Scott, that's a good fence you built over next to my place.

SCOTT

Yes, I thought I'd put up a good one while I was at it.

WASHBURN

And now, I suppose you'll be wanting me to put up one just like it.

SCOTT

Well, it would help...

WASHBURN

....and, by golly, I'm going to do it, too!



DEVINE

It'll take more than a fence to stop that gully cutting down through the draw. Why don't you two talk to that soil erosion man from LeRoy...

WASHBURN

What! And have CCC boys running all over the place? I wouldn't have that gang on my farm.

DEVINE

I talked to him...Gentle, I think his name was, yes....George Gentle. He's going to work out a plan for my farm.

SCOTT

Say, I believe I'll see him. I need plenty of help, and I know I can't tackle the job alone...gullies, gullies everywhere...

WASHBURN

...not me!

ORGAN:

ANNOUNCER

But Charles Washburn is a progressive farmer, and he did investigate. Farm plans were worked up to control erosion on the three farms east of Bloomington, in the Sangamon River watershed where the Soil Conservation Service was demonstrating proper land use methods...

SOUND: Four or five hogs grunting, squealing, etc., as they are fed.

DEVINE

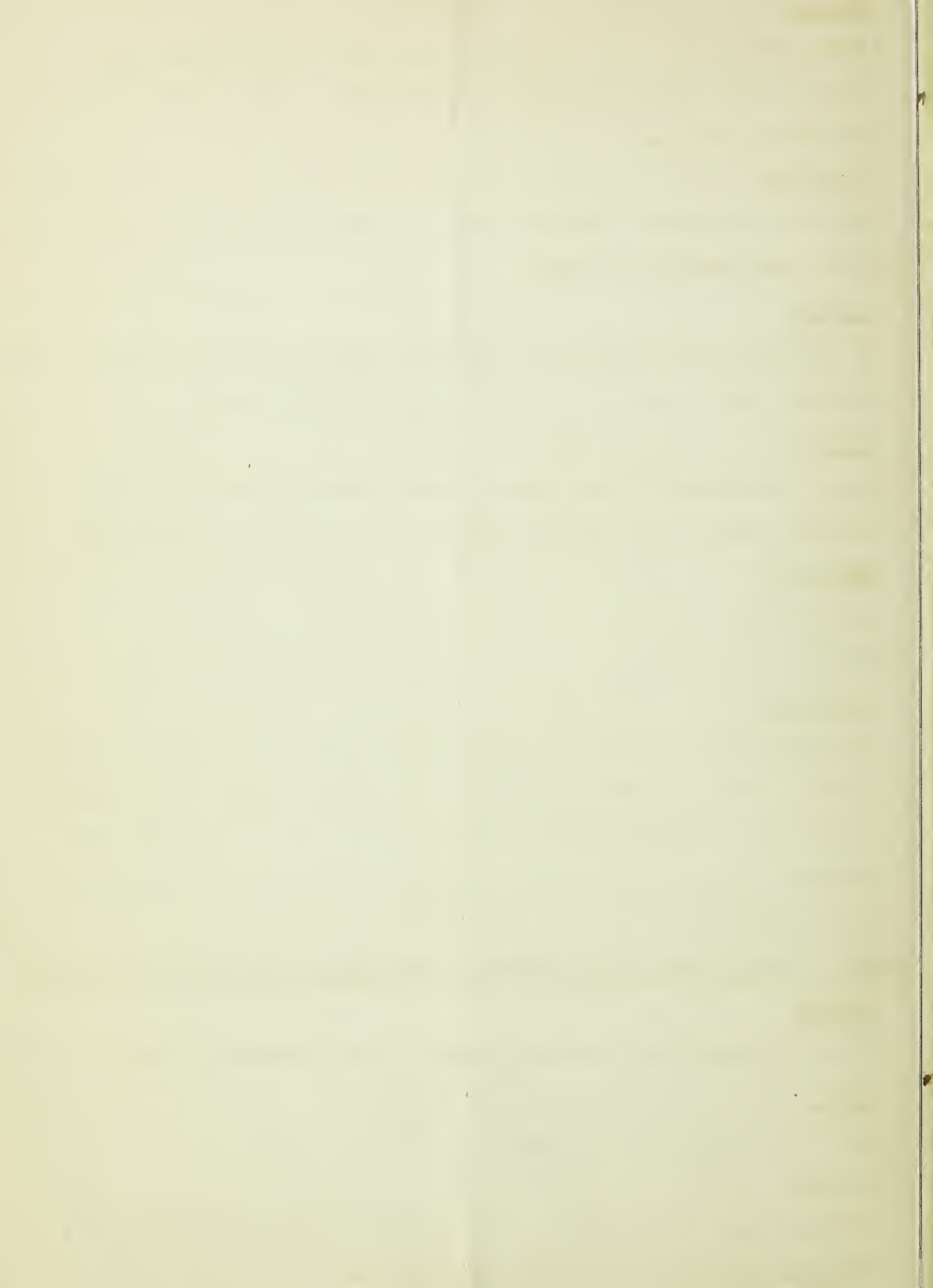
You'll notice they don't get close to that electric fence.

SCOTT

How do you like that electric fence?

DEVINE

Pretty good. I'm having a little trouble with my wind charger, though. Didn't put it quite high enough.



SCOTT

No?

DEVINE

Aw, when the wind's from the south or east or west it don't turn any harder than it is now.

SOUND: Automobile driving up.

SCOTT

Looks like you've got a caller, Bill.

DEVINE

Who....reckon we've both got a caller.

SOUND: Automobile stops, car door opens and closes.

GENTLE (fading in)

Well, it looks like I'm going to kill two birds with one stone.

How are you, Bill? Hello, Scott.

DEVINE AND SCOTT

Howdy, George. Hello, Mr. Gentle.

GENTLE

Maybe I picked a bad time to call on you, Bill, but I was out this way so thought I'd stop by.

DEVINE

Not at all, not at all. Let's go up on the porch.

SOUND: Men walking along, climbing up steps, and sitting down.

GENTLE

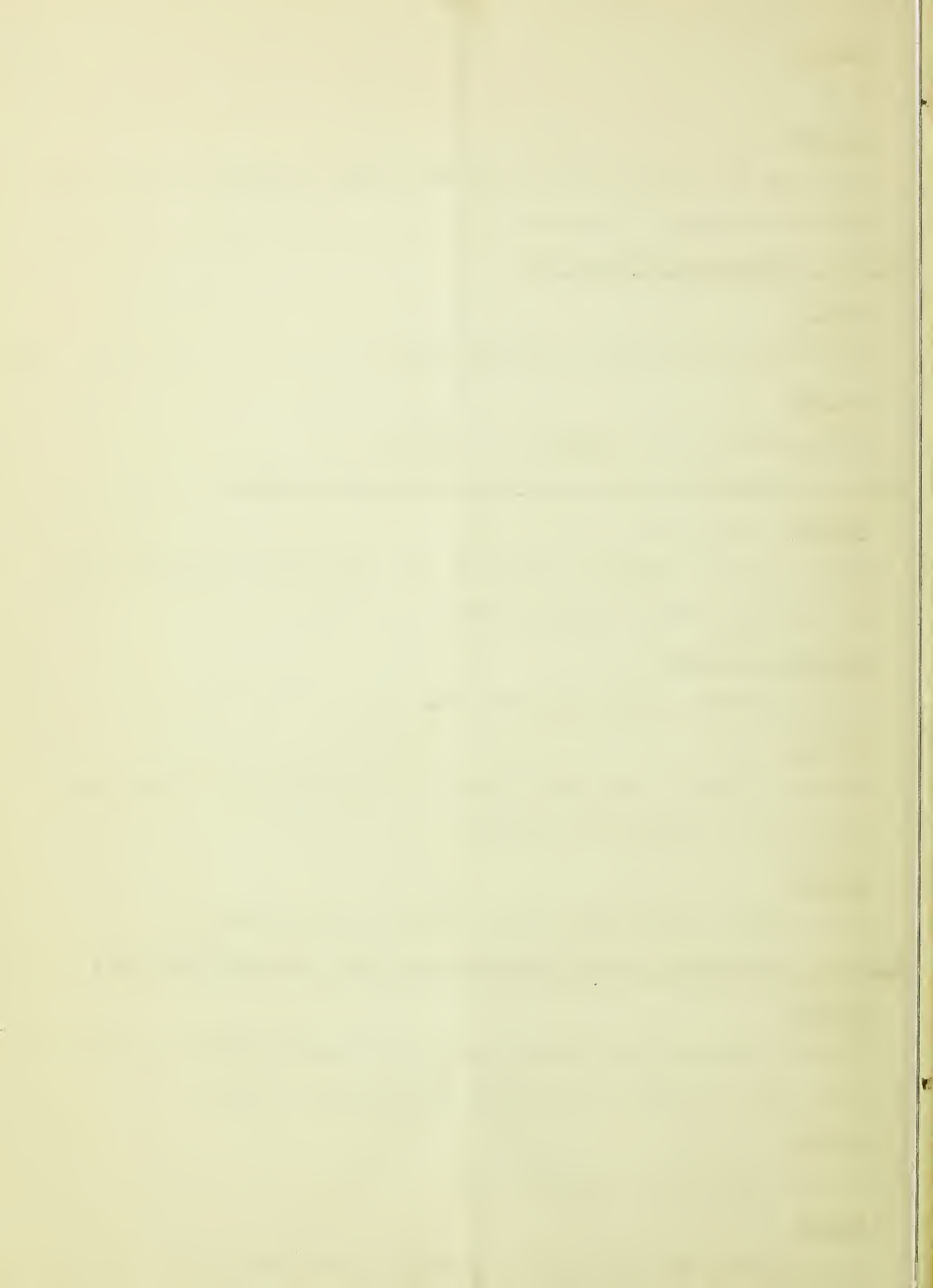
Stopped over to your place, Scott, and couldn't raise a soul, and then went on over to Washburn's but he was in town.

DEVINE

Yes, he told me he was going in.

SCOTT

Say, George, did you get that erosion plan worked out?





GENTLE

Not quite, but it'll be finished before long, I think. You see, it's a little tougher than usual on this job...

SCOTT

You mean, where you're trying to work out plans for three farms at once?

GENTLE

That's it. That was one of the reasons I was out this way.

SCOTT

I hope we can get something done about that gully down there.

DEVINE

Yeah, it's about eight feet wide and waist deep, and getting deeper all the time. It hasn't been crossed with machinery for several years.

SCOTT

If you think it's bad on your place, come on down and see how it's cutting the devil out of mine. I just wish that was the only gully I had. Anybody that'd grow 65 acres of corn on an 80-acre rolling farm...

GENTLE

Well, now, that gully is just one of your problems. Your main problem, Bill, is sheet erosion...

DEVINE

Maybe so, but I've been trying to do something about it. Using a rotation, and plowing on the contour.

GENTLE

That plowing on the contour is mighty important, all right...





DEVINE

I guess I've stuck to crazy farming longer than anybody. Only fools like me will try it.

GENTLE (laughs)

You're wrong there! Contour tillage is getting mighty popular. Oh, I know, it takes some effort to change from the straight rows he's always used, to crooked rows on the contour, but it saves soil.

DEVINE

After I tried it, I like to farm that way...

SCOTT

....well, it's not doing anything about that gully. Over on my farm the gully waters tore up a tile drainage line...a good one, too.

GENTLE

I'm working on that gully angle. You see, Bill, the water from your farm is damaging Scott's fields. And the run-off from both farms is hurting Washburn.

DEVINE

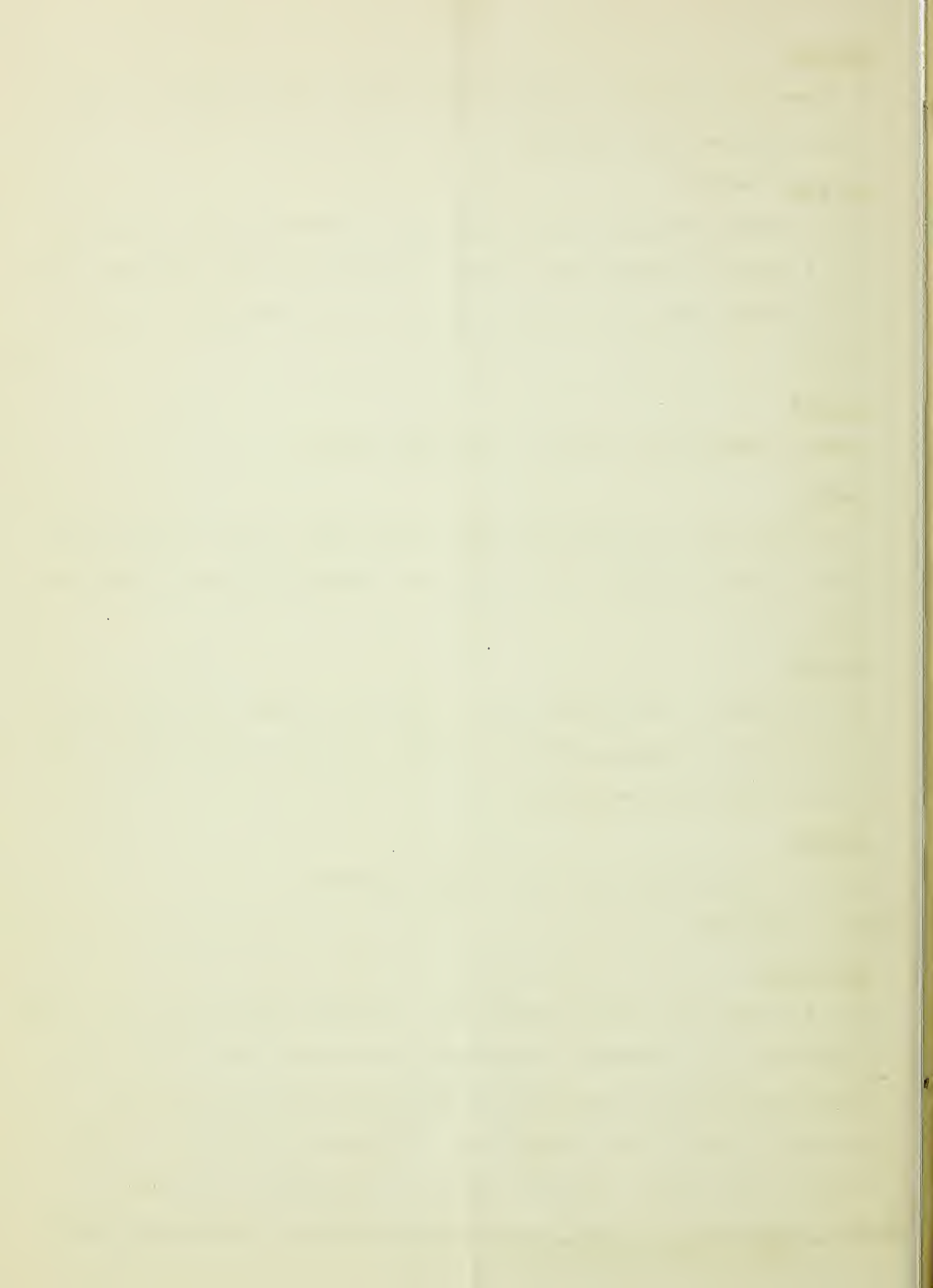
Then it looks like we'd better get together.

ORGAN: TOGETHER.

ANNOUNCER

Get together the three farmers did. William Devine, living on the headwaters of a 72-acre watershed, and H. M. Scott and Charles Washburn living on the lower parts of the drainage area, all decided to halt this movement of the topsoil, moving down the draw to the creek, down the creek to the Kickapoo River...

SOUND: Automobile driving along, just entering outskirts of small town (1,000 population)



SCOTT

I had to come in to LeRoy anyhow, so we might just as well all come in and see how the erosion plans are getting along.

DEVINE

That's what I thought.

WASHBURN

Maybe so, but I've got a lot of work to do. I don't see why we didn't have him come out to the farm like he always does.

SCOTT

That's it over there, isn't it, Bill?

DEVINE

Yeah, in that old bank building.

SOUND: Car stops, men get out, walk across sidewalk, enter door.

GENTLE

Well, hello!

WASHBURN, SCOTT, DEVINE

(All give mingled greetings. Comment on the weather, etc.)

GENTLE

Here, let's pull up some chairs.

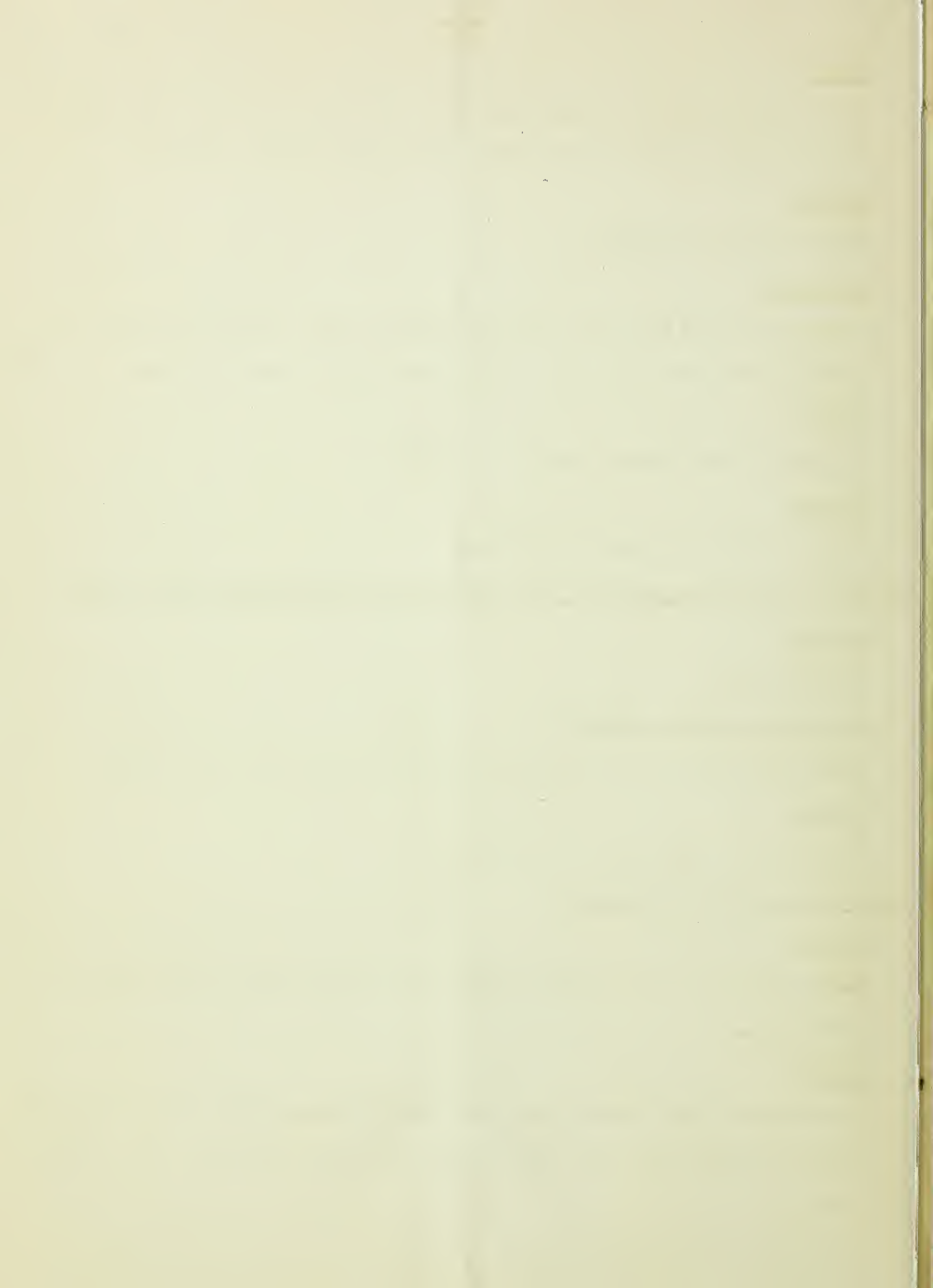
SOUND: Scraping of chairs.

GENTLE

Now, we've got this thing pretty well worked out, and I hope it suits you.

SCOTT

Anything'll suit me that'll stop that gully. Takes more'n an old kitchen range or a pile of tin cans to stop a gully. I've found out.





GENTLE

Then you've learned a lesson a lot more farmers can learn. Some of them still try to stop gullies by throwing in old automobile bodies.

SCOTT (chuckling)

Yeah, but you know, these new streamlined automobiles aren't as good gully pluggers as the old square radiator models. (all laugh)

GENTLE

Seriously, Scott, your farm is getting a lot better.

DEVINE

You can tell that from the road.

SCOTT

I've got a pretty good cover on it now. Seems like alsike does better on poor land than it does on rich land.

GENTLE

If you lime it.

WASHBURN

I never did see so much lime put on at once! How much did you put on last year?

SCOTT

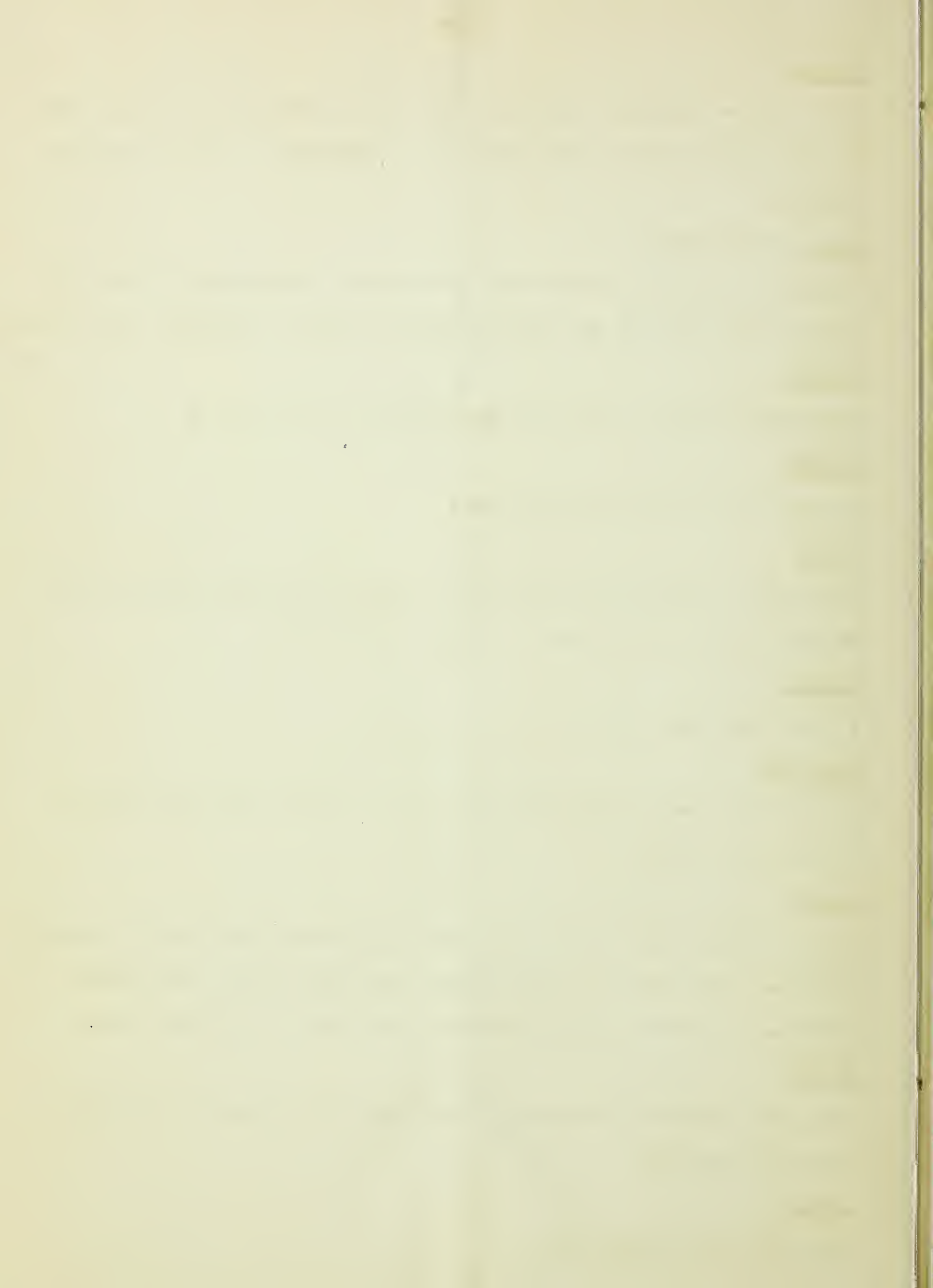
Not so much, about 130 tons. And the ground seems to be getting better. It's softer. When I came out here it was more like cement. Of course, you know what corn does to rolling land.

GENTLE

Now, you fellows know pretty well what we've planned for your farms in general.

DEVINE

And it's all right, too.





WASHBURN

Yeah, it don't look so bad.

GENTLE

Now, on that 72-acres that seems to be causing this big gully, it's going to take contour cultivation...

DEVINE

...we've got that.

GENTLE

terracing...

DEVINE

Got that, too...

GENTLE

And you'll need more of it. Strip cropping, retirement of those steep slopes that you've been cultivating--putting 'em back to pasture and meadow--and two dams.

WASHBURN

Now, wait a minute! Dams cost money.

GENTLE

I know they do, and so do farms. Our engineers say that two reinforced concrete notch dams will finish the job as far as that gully is concerned.

SCOTT

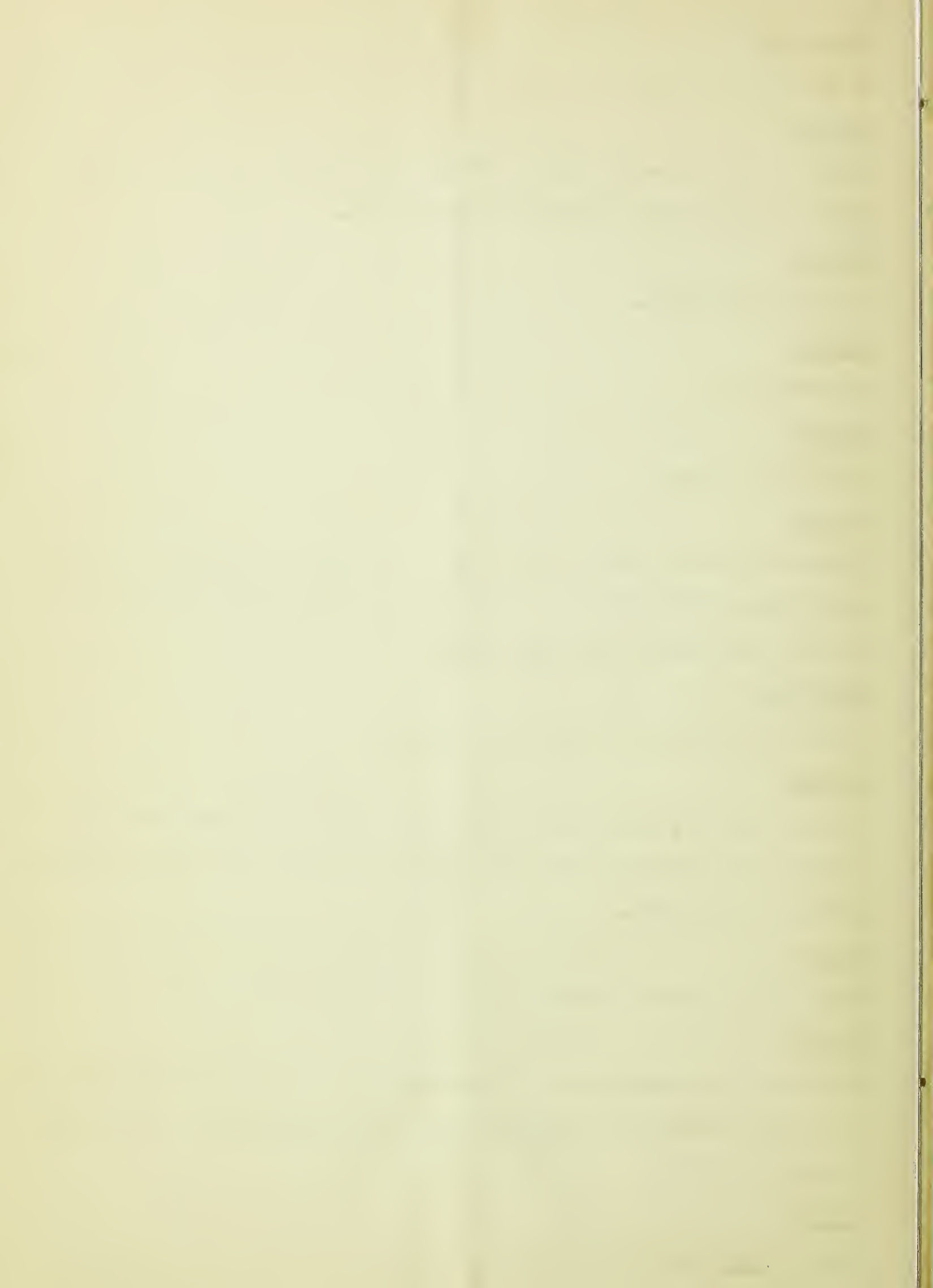
Then I say they're worth it.

GENTLE

Another point, Scott, one of the dams will not only help save soil, but it'll build up a stock reservoir for your sheep, cattle, and hogs...

SCOTT

Then I know they're worth it.



DEVINE

What about me?

GENTLE

You don't have any livestock to speak of, Bill. The logical place for one of the dams is on Washburn's place, and the other on the Scott farm.

DEVINE

Well, I'm willing to do anything reasonable. It looks like we've got a joint problem here.

WASHBURN

Now, hold on. I don't mean to be hard-headed, but I want to know just who's going to pay what.

GENTLE

I've got it figured out here, as near as I could. Of course, that's something that you'll have to work out between you. Here are the figures.

DEVINE

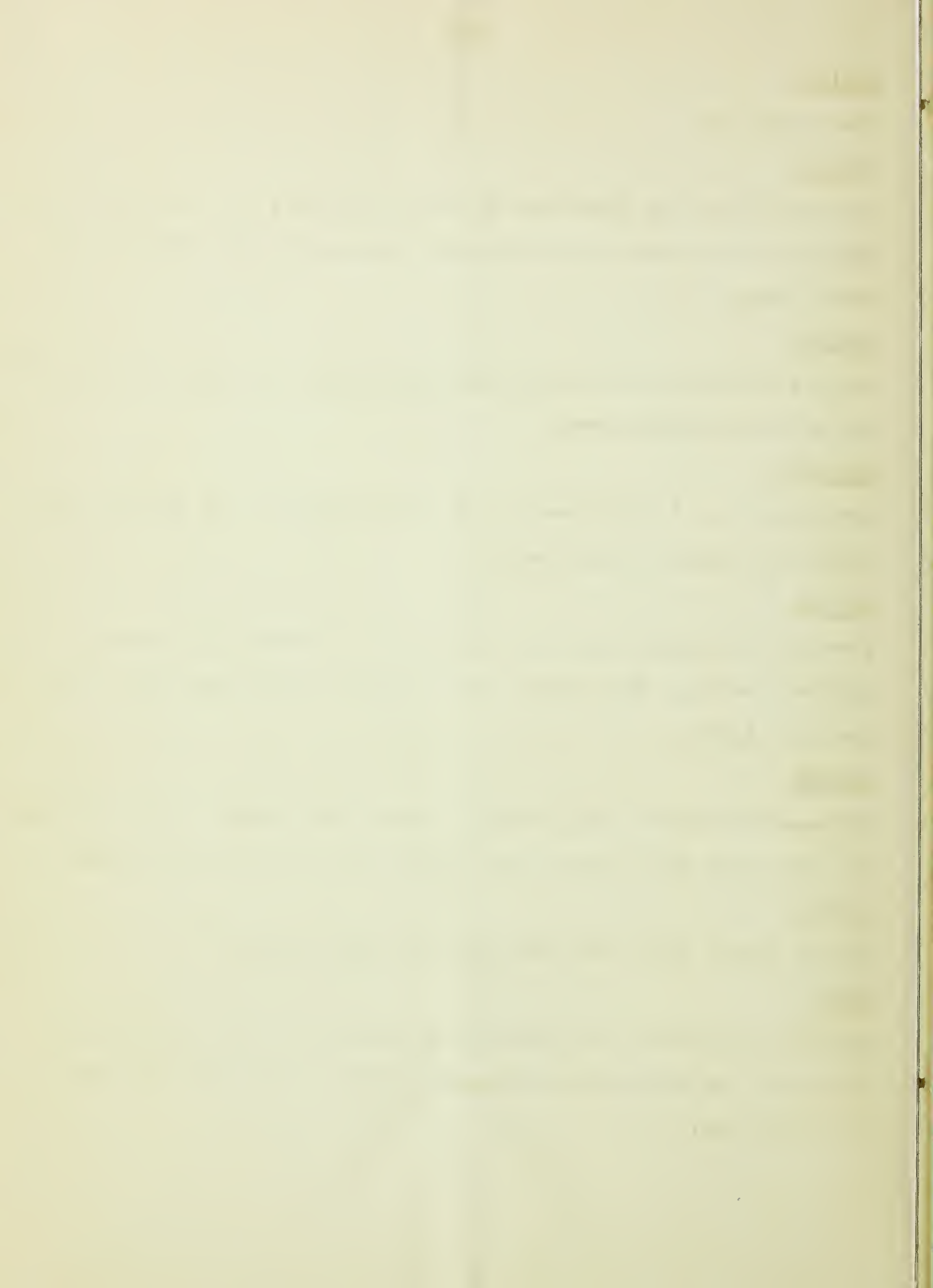
Hmmm...According to this, I'm to furnish 80 percent of the material for the upper dam...let's see, that's the one on Scott's land.

GENTLE

That's right, about 150 feet from the line fence.

SCOTT

And I'm to furnish the remaining 20 percent of the material for the upper dam and (whistles)....90 percent of the material for the lower dam.



WASHBURN

That's the one on my place. That means that I kick in the remaining 10 percent for the lower dam. Well, let's see....yeah, that seems about right. I just own about 10 acres of that 72.

GENTLE

Fine. Now, I know you fellows don't want to rush into this thing too fast, so my idea is for you to take these figures and these maps home with you, sit down across the kitchen table, and work out your own ideas on this cost division.

ORGAN:

ANNOUNCER

A few days later, Devine, Scott, and Washburn put their heads together and agreed on this mutual plan of solving a mutual problem. They agreed to this division of costs according to the benefit to be gained by each farm...

SOUND: Dam building scene. Forms have been constructed and concrete is being poured. Sounds of 20 CCC boys working, concrete mixer, wheelbarrows wheeling materials and concrete, dumping concrete into forms, etc.

SCOTT

Looks like we're nearing the end of the job, Bill.

DEVINE

And a worth while job, too. Look at those boys hustle!

SCOTT

They'll be plenty hungry by noon. What time is it, anyhow?

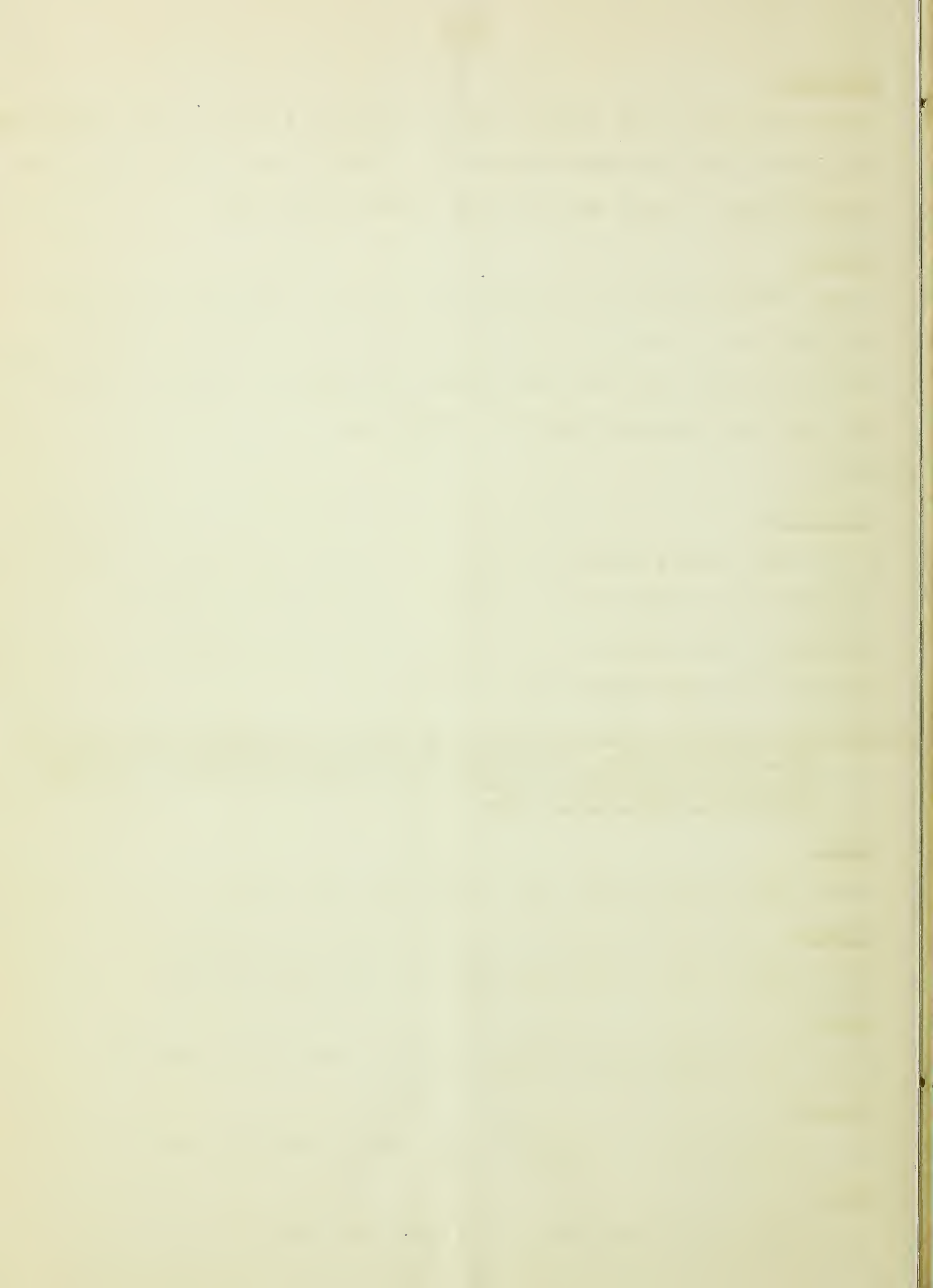
DEVINE

Not more than 11 o'clock. Getting hungry yourself, are you?

SCOTT

A little. Gosh, I'm glad to see that dam going in.





DEVINE

So am I. Doesn't make any difference if it is on your land or on Washburn's--this is one time we had to work together.

WASHBURN

A lot less water goes down that draw now than used to, with just one dam in. Think what it'll mean when they're both finished.

DEVINE

That terracing and contour farming are helping hold back some of the water. You know, I like contour farming more all the time.

WASHBURN

You must. You've got all of your cultivated land on the contour. I think I'll try that when I get ready to plow up my alfalfa. How about this terracing, anyhow?

SCOTT

These terraces have certainly stopped a lot of washing around here.

DEVINE

I like 'em. I had a little trouble plowing with them at first. Maybe I'd better learn more about farming. (All laugh slightly.)

SCOTT

Well, for my part, I've got nearly 4,000 feet of terraces on my pastures. Funny thing, how those pastures are coming along.

WASHBURN

See you've got some bluegrass in there.

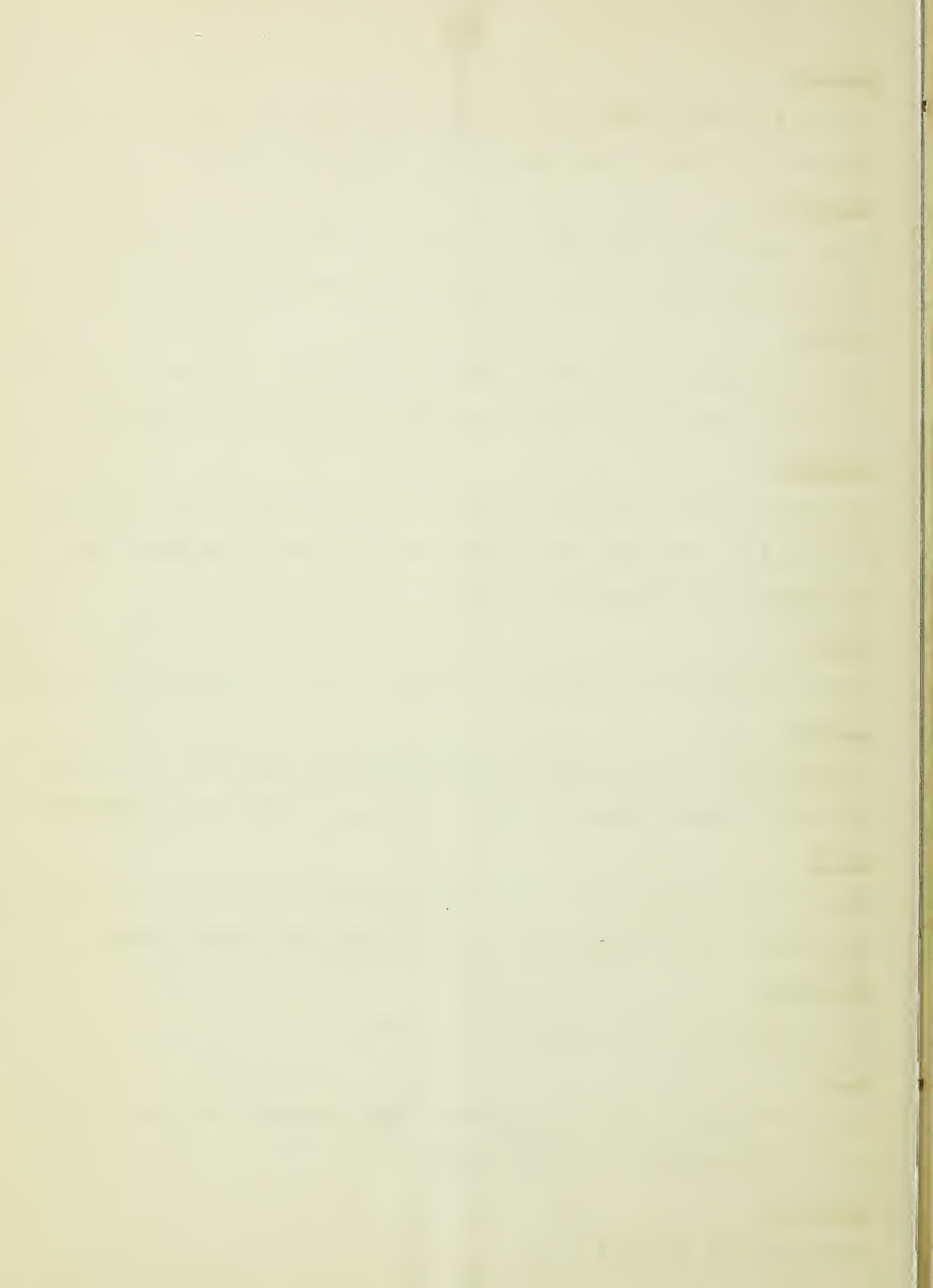
SCOTT

Yeah, I've got a mixture of grasses and legumes. Say, did you ever hear how bluegrass got into Illinois?

WASHBURN

Don't know as I have.





DEVINE

Oh, they tell all kinds of tales about bluegrass.

SCOTT

Well, now, don't quote me on this, but they tell me that bluegrass was brought in accidentally...

DEVINE

Accidentally?

SCOTT

....yes, on the feet of Indian ponies returning from raiding expeditions! (All laugh.)

DEVINE

Well, that's another story that will never be proved--or disproved.

WASHBURN

Speaking of stories, I think we have one right here in front of us.

SCOTT

You mean, this dam?

WASHBURN

Exactly. Any one of us could have worked out some sort of erosion control, but we couldn't have complete control without cooperation. Bill, you had a gully creeping up your land.

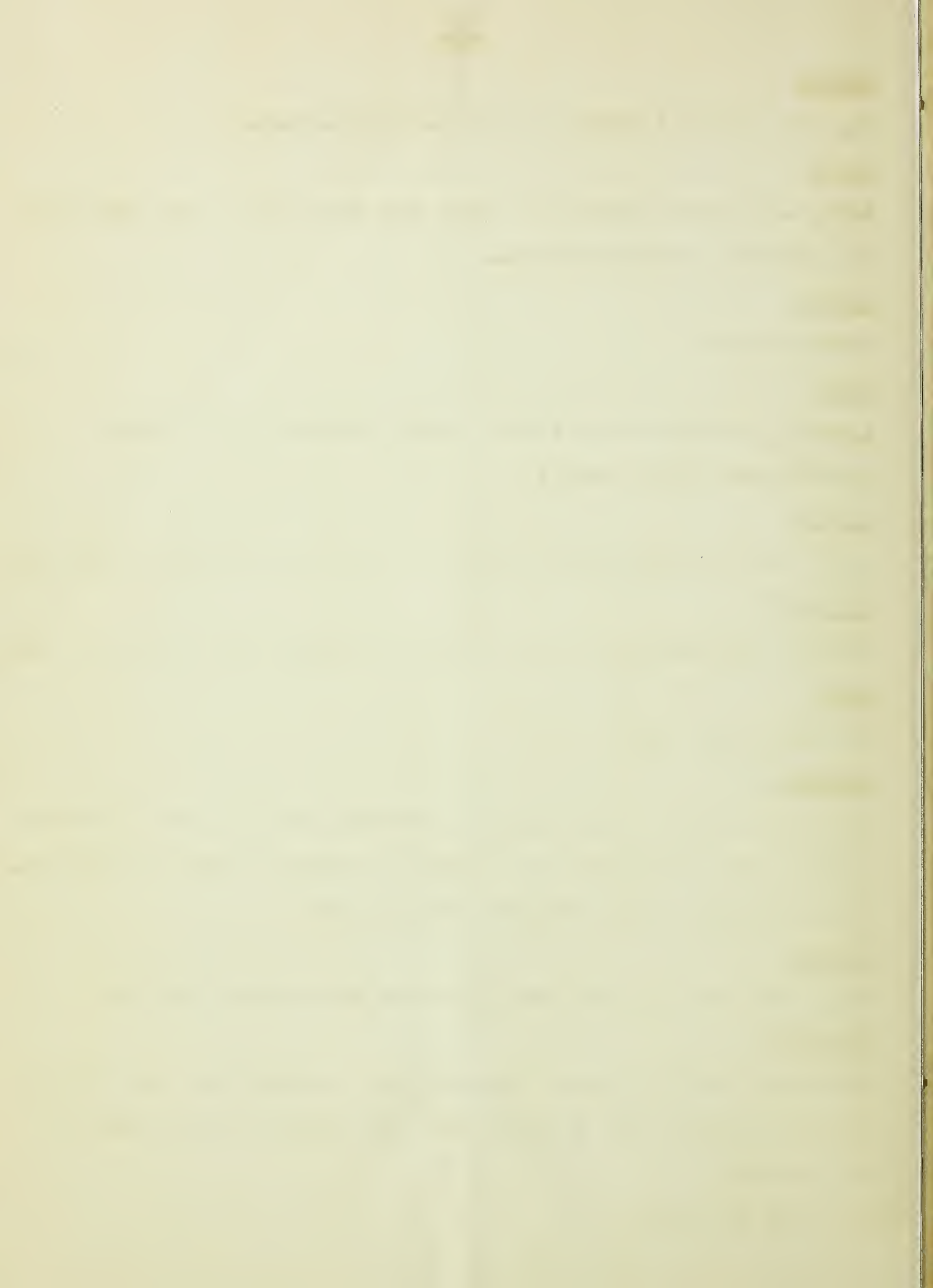
DEVINE

And I knew that run-off from my fields was helping cause it.

WASHBURN

And then, Scott, you and I saw our part. Anyhow, the three of us worked together, and we've got old man erosion licked plumb to the ground!

ORGAN: BYE BYE BLUES.



ANNOUNCER

Thus, through neighborly cooperation, three McLean County, Illinois, farmers solved a mutual problem--soil erosion. Today, they are still working together, working to include more of their neighbors in a rounded soil conservation program--cooperative efforts to control erosion where individual efforts prove futile--cooperation for erosion control.

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Next week, Out From Muskogee... Fortunes Washed Away is an educational presentation of the Nation's Station.

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